

## Bureau of Land Management Major Accomplishments – 2014

### **Providing an Economic Boost to Western Communities**

- In September, the BLM announced that for fiscal year 2013 public lands under the bureau's management contributed **\$107 billion to the U.S. economy** and supported more than 440,000 jobs.
- In fiscal year 2014, the BLM generated **\$5.2 billion in receipts** from public lands.
- Three sales of crude helium from the **Federal Helium Reserve** generated \$215 million in revenue for American taxpayers. These sales are a key part of the implementation of the Helium Stewardship Act of 2013. BLM's Helium program provides 22% of the world's annual Helium supply.

### **Institutionalizing Responsible Renewable Energy Development**

Building on the successes of the past five years of renewable energy development on public land, the BLM in the past year turned a significant corner in institutionalizing the responsible development of renewable energy on public lands.

- In 2014, the BLM approved four new **utility-scale renewable energy projects** on public lands. With this year's projects, Interior has now approved 52 solar, wind, and geothermal projects, including associated transmission facilities and infrastructure to connect to established power grids. When built, these projects would total nearly 14,000 megawatts of capacity - enough energy to power over 4.8 million homes. The BLM has approved enough projects to support over 21,000 construction and operations jobs, and to attract capital investments of \$36.6 billion.
- In July, the BLM conducted its first successful auction under the **Western Solar Plan**, generating \$5.8 Million in competitive bids for Nevada's Dry Lake Solar Energy Zone. Less than six months later, BLM reached a major permitting milestone for related projects, a process that had taken up to two years to complete under the previous system. Enabled by the upfront analysis built into the Western Solar Plan and advance planning for mitigation, the new approach results in better outcomes for communities and the environment while also providing industry with a faster, more certain process.
- In 2014, the BLM made great strides in supporting a **Western transmission grid for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**, moving forward with a number of key projects on public lands. Since 2009, the BLM has approved 75 transmission projects with capacities of 100 kV or larger. These projects stretch over 2,300 miles, or roughly the distance from Phoenix to Boston.
- In September, the U.S. Department of the Interior and State of California released the draft **Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan (DRECP)** for public review. This comprehensive blueprint for southern California will guide energy development,

transmission, and conservation efforts for the next generation and beyond. The draft was the result of an extensive public process, which included the BLM, the Fish and Wildlife Service, the California Energy Commission, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife and many other stakeholders.

- Also in September, Secretary Jewell announced the release of a **Competitive Leasing Proposed Rule** to encourage solar and wind energy development on public lands. The proposed regulations would promote the use of “designated leasing areas” that have few conflicts and that have clear guidelines to ensure a fair return to American taxpayers.

## **Enhancing Conventional Energy Opportunities and Management**

As part of the President’s All of the Above Energy Strategy, the BLM in 2014 moved forward on a number of crucial actions to ensure the safe and responsible development of oil and gas on public lands.

- The BLM continued to support a **robust and responsible oil and gas program** on federal public lands. Federal onshore oil production during fiscal year 2013 rose 7% from the previous year and has risen 30% since 2008. Oil production on tribal lands, which BLM helps support, rose 47% in fiscal year 2013 from the previous year and has more than tripled since 2008.
- In 2014, the BLM provided **leasing opportunities and drilling permits** in excess of industry demand. In fiscal year 2014, the BLM offered nearly 5.7 million acres across the country. Industry leased roughly 1.2 million acres of those acres. The BLM approved 3,769 drilling permits on public lands in 2014. During the same year, industry drilled 2,544 wells on these lands.
- Throughout 2014, the BLM worked to support legislative efforts to reauthorize and expand **Oil and Gas Pilot Offices**, originally instituted by the Energy Policy Act of 2005. A small number of the BLM’s field offices handle the majority of the agency’s oil and gas workload. The reauthorized program – approved by Congress at the end of 2014 – allows the BLM to add critical staff to the offices most in need of support.
- As part of the President’s budget request to Congress, the BLM placed unprecedented focus on the need to fully fund the BLM’s **Oil and Gas Inspection Program**. Citing a shortage of inspectors, declining budgets, and a record number of wells on public lands, Secretary Jewell, Director Kornze and other senior administration officials highlighted the importance of the BLM’s budget request for a fee system to increase the agency’s oil and gas inspection capacity and to better respond to industry demand. This continues to be a priority for the Bureau and the Department.
- In November, the BLM announced a landmark settlement agreement that protects the multiple resources of the **Roan Plateau** near Rifle, Colorado – considered one of Colorado’s most spectacular landscapes – while also allowing for responsible natural gas

development. The settlement helps protect high quality wildlife habitat and supports opportunities for outdoor recreation and energy development.

- In 2014, the BLM continued to move forward with **Master Leasing Plans** (MLPs) in areas where early planning can help ensure that oil and gas development goes forward while protecting other resource interests like ancient cultural artifacts, key wildlife habitat, and areas popular for recreation. In June, the BLM released its first MLP as part of the Lander Resource Management Plan. Several additional plans are in progress around the West.
- The BLM is **building a modern oil and gas permitting and well tracking system**. The new system will allow the BLM to efficiently manage and track wells drilled on public lands from the permitting stage through the inspection stage. Industry will be able to submit permit requests electronically, which should provide a notable improvement in permitting times. The new system will also allow BLM personnel to input inspection data from the field. The new system was beta-tested in the BLM's Vernal Field Office at the end of 2014. BLM-wide implementation is scheduled for late 2015.
- Throughout 2014, the BLM worked on **updating regulations** that shape how oil and gas development is conducted on our nation's public lands. Many of the BLM's current rules date back to the 1970s and 1980s and need to be updated **to match modern industry practices**. Some of the rules undergoing revision or consideration include:
  - **Hydraulic Fracturing** – The final rule for hydraulic fracturing will support the expanding domestic oil and gas production on public lands while also ensuring that development is done safely and responsibly.
  - **Venting and Flaring** – As a component of President Obama's Strategy to Cut Methane Emissions, the BLM is looking at ways to reduce the amount of methane, the primary ingredient in natural gas, that is lost into the atmosphere during drilling and oil and gas production on public lands.
  - **Waste Mine Methane** – The BLM is reviewing current regulations to look for opportunities to reduce methane emissions from surface and underground coal mines.
- The BLM in December updated guidance for its **coal program** that will help ensure a consistent, efficient, and fair coal lease sale process as well as new safety, inspection and enforcement guidance to promote responsible development of coal resources on the nation's public lands. The update is part of a suite of actions that the BLM has undertaken to keep pace with modern technology and practices in coal mining. The BLM's coal program accounted for 40% of total U.S. coal production in fiscal year 2013.
- The BLM continued to focus on addressing **hiring, training, and retaining oil and gas experts** in 2014. The BLM implemented a special pay rate for its engineers, established a bureau-wide group-based retention incentive, and implemented recruitment and relocation incentives for the most critical duty stations. The BLM also raised the standard classification for entry-level field inspectors, developed a pilot program to assist

with recruiting talented students into BLM positions, and expanded opportunities to place qualified veterans in oil and gas offices.

## **Building Lasting Partnerships for Meaningful Conservation**

The BLM achieved a number of important conservation milestones in 2014, demonstrating the power of locally-driven partnerships for the conservation of sensitive species and iconic landscapes.

- In May, the President designated the **Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument** in New Mexico, protecting several iconic mountain ranges along with a biologically and culturally significant high-desert landscape. The designation was strongly supported by New Mexico's congressional delegation, community leaders, and local businesses.
- In March, the BLM-managed California Coastal Monument was expanded with the President's designation of the **Point Arena-Stornetta Public Lands**. The President's action protected approximately 1,665 acres of stunning northern California coastline, establishing the first onshore addition to the monument, which runs the length of the state and includes 20,000 rocks and islands.
- The BLM announced in July that it is making **Sage Grouse Habitat Protection** the highest natural resource priority for its fire program. The announcement is part of the BLM's comprehensive strategy to conserve sage grouse habitat, which includes ongoing work to finalize the details of 14 regional plans that will provide meaningful conservation for the bird and predictability for those that work and recreate on public lands.
- The BLM finalized the **Lander Resource Management Plan** in June, providing for energy development while protecting important wildlife and cultural and natural resources. The plan was the first of the BLM's resource management plans to give a primary focus to the management of greater sage-grouse habitat. The Lander plan also includes the BLM's first-ever master leasing plan, designed to promote smart up-front planning for oil and gas development.
- In June, leaders from federal and state agencies came together to celebrate 20 years of partnership to native plant conservation and to launch a cross-government effort to ensure that agencies are working cooperatively and strategically to rehabilitate rangelands after each fire season. Work to develop a federal-state **Strategy on Seed Research, Sourcing and Storage** is ongoing.
- In fiscal year 2014, the BLM purchased fee and easement interest in 8,819 acres of high-value conservation land through the **Land and Water Conservation Fund**. Completed projects will help strengthen landscape management efforts at the Carrizo Plain National Monument in California, the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument in Oregon, the Canyons of the Ancients National Monument in Colorado, and the Pariette Wetlands Area of Critical Environmental Concern in Utah.

## Enhancing the Connection between the American People and their Public Lands

The BLM continues to focus on the way it engages the American people in celebrating and managing their public lands.

- In 2014, the BLM was able to provide nearly 1,800 work and training opportunities for youth corps members and interns in 2014, helping to develop the **Next Generation of Public Land Stewards**. In addition, more than 70,000 children participated in overnight and day camps, hiking, fishing, and other recreational activities as part of the BLM's Take It Outside program.
- In May, the BLM began public engagement on its **Planning 2.0** initiative, aimed at creating a more efficient, responsive planning process that provides new ways for the public to engage with the agency. The initiative will also explore new ways to strengthen landscape-level management, ensuring that the right uses are planned for in the right areas.
- The BLM continues to focus on developing **innovative ways to engage the American people** in celebration of their public lands. For the first time, some BLM lands can now be found on Google Maps. The BLM is also leading the way in providing information to the public, including efforts to provide high-quality recreational maps for those using printed materials and those using electronic mobile devices. The BLM's popular and informative Tumblr site ([mypubliclands.tumblr.com](http://mypubliclands.tumblr.com)) has been celebrated as one of the nation's best sources of information about public lands.

## Improving the Way the BLM Does Business

In 2014, the BLM made great strides toward bringing technology and new solutions to improve the way we do business.

- In 2014, the BLM proposed a new GPS-based survey method for executing **Land Conveyances in Alaska**. Under historic practices, the program would have required an additional 20 years to complete. The BLM's new approach will allow for a dramatic reduction in timelines, with completion now likely in just 5 years. The benefits of this innovation includes saving the American taxpayer \$360-500 million and finally fulfilling the conveyance commitments made in the Alaska Statehood Act. The BLM has initiated a pilot project for the new method, with the goal of fully adopting the approach in early 2015. As of November 2014, the BLM has completed 98 percent of parcels for the Native allotment programs, 74 percent of the entitlements for regional and village corporations, and 61 percent of the entitlements for the State of Alaska.
- The BLM finalized its **Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Implementation Plan** (2015-2017), due for public release in early 2015. The BLM hired its first ever Diversity Change Officer to assist in leading the organization's Diversity and Inclusion Program and Initiatives. Approximately 93 BLM employees attended training and were certified

as Diversity Change Agents in 2014. These employees join a cadre of nearly 300 workplace leaders committed to increasing awareness of the productivity benefits of diversity and inclusion.

- As part of its continuing efforts to improve the national **Wild Horse and Burro Program**, the BLM in March sought research proposals to develop new or improve existing ways of controlling the population growth of wild horses and burros that roam public lands in the West. The BLM is working with the National Academies of Sciences to select the most promising proposals from among the many applications received. The goal of the effort is to produce a long-term, **sustainable fertility solution** that will make it possible to manage our nation's wild horses and burros on the range.
- In April, the BLM joined Federal firefighting partners in releasing the **National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy**, outlining new approaches to coordinate and integrate efforts in order to better address the nation's wildland fire threats. In addition to the Strategy, the President's fiscal year 2015 budget sought to stabilize agency fire budgets by treating extreme fires like other natural disasters. In 2014, the BLM also published its first-ever Standards for Fire Business Management handbook, part of the bureau's ongoing work to improve the business management of its fire program.